

# BBC Learning English

## Teachers' Lesson Ideas

### *The Environment*



This lesson idea was sent in by **Maria Cecelia Ferraro** from Argentina. It refers to 3 BBC Learning English programmes to set up a debate on the environment.

**Level:** Intermediate - advanced

**Topic:** The Environment & climate change

**Lesson time:** up to 2 hours

**Materials:** If you decide to use the worksheet for stage 4, you will need to print enough copies for the whole class (you may decide to save time by missing out some sections of the worksheet). Students also need access to the following:

- Talk about English: Environment Quiz  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/webcast/070503\\_environment\\_quiz/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/webcast/070503_environment_quiz/)
- Words in The News: Climate Change Warning  
There is a link to this programme on the 'Talk about English' page, or it can be reached on [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2006/01/060130\\_icecap.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2006/01/060130_icecap.shtml)
- Weekender: Carbon Neutral Al Gore  
There is a link to this programme on the 'Talk about English' page, or it can be reached on [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/1549\\_weekender\\_extra/page39.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/1549_weekender_extra/page39.shtml)

Here's Maria's lesson plan.

Hi! I'm Maria Cecilia, from Argentina. I 'discovered' your website for learners of English only a few weeks ago. Before that, I didn't use the Internet for teaching so much. I teach English in-company, so I decided to profit from it immediately. Last week I used your *Talk about English* programme ('*Environment Quiz*') to close a unit on the Environment.

#### Stage 1: Introduction to the topic

The lesson went like this: first I divided the class into two 'groups'. One group read the article on *Words in the News - Climate change warning* and another one listened to *Weekender - Carbon neutral Al Gore*. Originally I had planned for the reading of the script, but I chose to give the students the option, since their level and listening skills are very good. I explained the task before they started: the purpose was to exchange the information afterwards, and I set the time limit I thought appropriate for the preparation of this activity (10 min). At the beginning the students were a bit puzzled as to why the material was split, but as soon as I gave the instructions they were willing to try. Some students may worry about not being exposed to the same language, but the teacher should tell them that they will get the whole material at the end of the task. (Besides, language

interaction in real life is a bit like that, isn't it?). In this particular case, these two articles combined and complemented themselves wonderfully. When they talked about what they had read / listened, we were able to see the interrelation between the two articles, and at the end of the task the students understood more about the topic, which was motivating for them. (Please note that in Argentina environmental issues seem to be left aside, they are not given as much importance as in developed countries. Consequently, the students may not know much about the topic.)

#### **Stage 2: Preparation for debate**

After this first task, I led the students into a debate: who has most responsibility for protecting the environment, individuals or governments? They would be working in groups of 3: One of the students was going to coordinate the debate and the other two were going to take two opposite positions, resembling the debate on the *Talk about English* programme. The preparation for this task involves note-taking of main points to put forward. Again, a time limit was set, with a rounding-off minute to remind them that they had to decide on the order of these points and how they were going to put them forward in the most convincing way. During this time I monitored the activity and discussed with the coordinator of the debate about her role in the task. I also asked her to take quick notes of all the points she could think of for both sides - mainly to keep her working.

#### **Stage 3: The Debate**

After 8-10 minutes, the students were ready for the debate. Everything went very well.

Tips for other teachers:

- Make sure the students know the rules of a debate, and that they only put forward the necessary points to support their position.
- A debate is not a discussion, and the participants should not be interrupted - not even for grammar mistakes, in my opinion, unless it's necessary or important to correct them (the students could be given this explanation beforehand).
- Also make sure that both participants in the debate have more or less the same level of English, if not one of them will always have an advantage over the other. To make matters easier, I chose the students' roles in the debate, taking into account their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their position on the topic -something which I intuitively knew.
- To make it more challenging, the teacher could decide for the students to take the position which opposes their real view, if she already knows their opinion. This could be interesting because, regardless of their actual views on the topic, they have to think of other points to

put forward in an effective way, and they may discover new things they hadn't thought of before the task. I think it could be a rich experience. However, this makes the task much more challenging as I said above, both for students and the teacher.

#### Stage 4: Listening

After the debate, we listened to the *Talk about English* programme I mentioned at the beginning. My students have good listening skills and need challenging tasks, since they already work in an American company and they deal with English in their everyday life. I thought that the task could be a bit long for them, so I prepared a worksheet to ensure purpose and also to make sure they got the interesting expressions the first time they listened (if you rewind too many times, the listening may become too long). There are a lot of tasks on the worksheet and you might decide to save time by missing some of them out. The debate within the programme is more interesting once the students have participated in it, and they can better figure out the points made by the four participants - the different accents making it difficult to follow them!

Please note that a purpose for listening to the debate should be made beforehand, eg. if the students' main points on the class debate were put together in a chart, the purpose could be to listen for points not mentioned before and include them in the chart. Please, advise the students to take down the main words, not complete sentences, or else, they might go crazy.

This was a two hour lesson, so it worked. Besides, the students were already acquainted with the topic since it was the end of a unit. The previous class we had already listened to an interview with Laurie David, one producer of *An Inconvenient Truth* - also available on the Internet. One more tip: mp3 listenings can be turned to CD listenings, this was better for me, since the company CD player is better than my basic mp3 player for teaching purposes, and there are no PCs or notebooks in this class.

I have found each one of the activities relevant, and it's evident that a professional is behind.

**Maria Cecilia Ferraro**

**BBC Learning English says:** *Thank you so much for this lovely lesson idea, Maria: it's our pleasure to publish it on our website J*

# BBC Learning English

## Teachers' Lesson Ideas

### *The Environment*



---

#### Stage 4 Student Worksheet: ENVIRONMENT QUIZ

This worksheet accompanies the BBC Learning English programme: *Talk About English: Environment Quiz*. The audio for this worksheet can be found at:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/webcast/070503\\_environment\\_quiz/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/webcast/070503_environment_quiz/)

#### **I. Introduction**

Listen to the introduction (before the first round) and explain why these phrases are mentioned:

- to battle for the *Talk about English* trophy
- to take part in a debate
- listen out for this sound
- an extra bonus point
- listen live online

#### **II. Round 1 – Environment questions**

How do the students answer these questions?

1. What position did Al Gore use to have in American politics?
2. What is the name of his documentary film?
3. How does he try to counter the environmental damage done by the flying he does?
4. Name one other thing connected with his current activities that he describes as being carbon neutral.
5. Climate Change Warning was a report about a specific country. Which country?
6. Which particular part of Greenland are scientists worried about?
7. The Greenland ice-cap is estimated to hold what percentage of the world's fresh water?

**Discuss:** In your country, is the environment a big story?

### III. Round 2

Complete the arguments put forward in the debate

***Individuals have the most responsibility for protecting the environment:***

- You can ..... to work
- You can ..... to work
- You can ..... the car at the weekend
- Individuals should ..... the place where they live and make it look more.....
- The government alone is not enough. We must take part in this.

***Governments have the most responsibility for protecting the environment:***

- Nowadays, protecting the environment has become a real .....
- The key role of the government is to .....and ..... the population
- Leaving the public to ..... alone with this issue is not worthwhile, because not everyone has the sensibility to understand and ..... this issue
- Moreover, the government has the money to .....scientific research. We need scientific knowledge to .....different ways to use alternative energies that are less dangerous for the environment.
- The government can ..... the knowledge among individuals to help them change their behaviour towards the .....
- The government has to ..... the right ....., like offering support to people to change from..... to ..... (eg. solar panels)
- Governments may have ..... meetings

---

IV. **How green are you?** What do the students say?

- Speaker 1 (Dunsan)
- Speaker 2 (Mi Ae Jo)
- Speaker 3 (Serena)
- Speaker 4 (Eduardo)

V. **General Knowledge Quiz**

Try to answer these questions before you listen and then check your answers

1. How many bones are there in the adult human body?
2. Where in the world is the Great Barrier Reef?
3. What is arachnophobia?

**While listening**

What does Callum say when he hears the first answer?

Why does Callum say 'Oh, that's a great shame'?

Which team won the public vote?

What gets wetter as it dries?

---

#### Stage 4 Worksheet: ENVIRONMENT QUIZ - ANSWERS

##### **I. Introduction**

Listen to the introduction (before the first round) and explain why these phrases are mentioned:

- to battle for the *Talk about English* trophy – *2 teams of students are going to take part in a quiz*
- to take part in a debate – *the 2 teams will participate in a debate*
- listen out for this sound – *it will indicate that students have used very good English*
- an extra bonus point – *for the students who use very good English*
- listen live online – *people can do this*

##### **II. Round 1 – Environment questions**

How do the students answer these questions?

1. What position did Al Gore use to have in American politics? *Vice-president*
2. What is the name of his documentary film? *An Inconvenient Truth*
3. How does he try to counter the environmental damage done by the flying he does? - *He lives a carbon neutral life*
4. Name one other thing connected with his current activities that he describes as being carbon neutral. *His tour, his book and the production of his film were all carbon neutral*
5. Climate Change Warning was a report about a specific country. Which country? *Greenland*
6. Which particular part of Greenland are scientists worried about? *The ice cap*
7. The Greenland ice-cap is estimated to hold what percentage of the world's fresh water? *10%*

Discuss: In your country, is the environment a big story?

##### **III. Round 2**

Complete the arguments put forward in the debate

***Individuals have the most responsibility for protecting the environment:***

- You can *walk* to work
- You can *ride a bike* to work
- You can *try to avoid using* the car at the weekend
- Individuals should *take care of* the place where they live and make it look more *natural*
- The government alone is not enough. We must take part in this.

---

***Governments have the most responsibility for protecting the environment:***

- Nowadays, protecting the environment has become a real *emergency*.
- The key role of the government is to *protect* and *look after* the population.
- Leaving the public to *be* alone with this issue is not worthwhile, because not everyone has the sensibility to understand and *solve* this issue.
- Moreover, the government has the money to *invest in* scientific research. We need scientific knowledge to *come up with* different ways to use alternative energies that are less dangerous for the environment.
- The government can *spread* the knowledge among individuals to help them change their behaviour towards the *environment*.
- The government has to *implement* the right *strategies* like offering support to people to change from *carbon-based energy* to *eco-friendly forms of energy* (eg. solar panels).
- Governments may have *global* meetings.

IV. **How green are you?** What do the students say?

- Speaker 1 (Dunsan) *tries not to litter, is trying to stop smoking*
- Speaker 2 (Mi Ae Jo) *uses public transport, separates rubbish*
- Speaker 3 (Serena) *recycles*
- Speaker 4 (Eduardo) *walks to school, avoids taking the car, uses public transport*

V. **General Knowledge Quiz**

Try to answer these questions before you listen and then check your answers

1. How many bones are there in the adult human body? *206*
2. Where in the world is the Great Barrier Reef? *Australia (the Pacific ocean)*
3. What is arachnophobia? *Fear of spiders*

**While listening**

- What does Callum say when he hears the first answer? *It would be difficult to stand up if we only had 58 bones*
- Why does Callum say 'Oh, that's a great shame'? *There wasn't time for the teams to answer the question*
- Which team won the public vote? *Bell*
- What gets wetter as it dries? *A towel*